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AN HISTORICAL

—AND—

DESCRIPTIVE SKETCH

—OF—

Austin County,

TEXAS,

By Martin M. Henney,

—FORMING THE—

Centennial Address,

Delivered at the Celebration near Bellville,

July 4th, 1877.

Banner Print, Brenham

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Page 1. (of cover) last line, for 1877, read 1876.

Page 6, line 10, for David, read Daniel.

Page 19, line 2, for Leona, read Leon.

Page 23, line 31, for 1902, read 1902.

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AN
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE SKETCH
OF
AUSTIN COUNTY, TEXAS,

By MARTIN M. KENNEY,

*Forming the Centennial Address, delivered at the Celebration
near Bellville. July 4th, 1876*

Austin county is centrally situated in the physical geography of Texas. A brief sketch of that geography will lead to the most ready comprehension of the natural features of the section embraced in this county.

The immediate valley of the Mississippi is shrouded in a dense unbroken forest. From the great river, going west, the continuity of the forest is soon found to be interrupted by occasional prairies, and as we advance westward the prairies become more and more numerous and extensive. The forest is at length confined to the alluvial valleys of the streams, and to certain belts of sandy soil which stretch across the country from Northeast to Southwest. The prairies are not continuous either, being interspersed with salient points of timber: with groves, of a great variety of outline, lone trees and thickets which fringe the minor streams, forming highly picturesque landscapes. Further west the prairies predominate more and more until finally they stretch away in vast treeless plains. Texas occupies all the intermediate gradations from the damp unbroken forests of the Mississippi to the rainless and treeless wastes of the Rio Grande. Austin county is in that intermediate position where the forest and prairie are equally divided.

There is another gradation of the general topography of the State from the mountains to the gulf. The northwestern

half of Texas is a great table land elevated nearly a mile above the level of the sea. Toward the southeast the surface of the country slopes down through a succession of beautiful mountains and hills to vast levels, which appear to have been recently the bottom of the sea. These levels are nearly all prairies; they present to the spectator a striking image of the expanse of the sea, which indeed they join by so gentle a gradient that they are distinguished to the eye by the blue of the water and the green of the plain, rather than by the elevation of the coast, and the feeble tides of the gulf maintain a ceaseless dispute with the land for an uncertain boundary.

Austin county, in its southern portion, includes the inland margin of the level prairies. In the northwest the boundary lines of the county run over rolling hills which rise to an average height of fifty feet above the intervening valleys. Some hills are more than a hundred feet in height and afford views of very beautiful and extensive landscapes. The general surface of the county rises from southeast to northwest about three hundred feet. The streams course to the southeast as do most others in Texas. One considerable tributary of the Brazos river crosses the county. This stream now called Mill creek, was known to the Spaniards as the Palmetto (from a species of dwarf palm common to the Mississippi valley which grows profusely on its lower course.) This stream is formed by the union of two principal branches, the east and west Mill creeks, having their sources in Washington county, and an immense number of tributary rivulets which flow in from all sides in Austin county. Two other independent tributaries of the Brazos rise and run their course in this county named by the early settlers, from natural features which designated them, the Caney and the Piney creeks, though the cane brake near the mouth of one and a few scattered pines on the other, are very trivial in extent. Their sources are in the forests of oaks. Their tributary branches run between prairie hills crowned with groves, and announce their course down the valleys by fringes of thickets and waterside trees. In the Southwest two sources of the St. Bernard river, rising in the oak woods, run, with few tributaries, a solitary and shadeless course through sandy prairies, until they leave the county before any considerable stream is formed. There are perhaps more springs and living streams in Austin county than in any other in Texas, and there are but few counties in the United States so well supplied with running water.

A belt of oak forest, which has an average width of five miles, extends across Austin county from northeast to southwest perpendicular to the general course of the streams. It joins the main forest east of the Brazos and is continued

westward to the San Antonio and Nueces rivers, disappearing in stunted groves beyond the latter. The soil upon which this timber grows is sandy. Its whole length is above two hundred miles. It is one of a number of similar belts nearly parallel, but in the northern part of Texas conforming more to the meridians. They are called the cross timbers. No tenable theory of their formation has been propounded. They do not conform to the hills and valleys of the present surface of the country. They are characterized by a sandy soil which in the northern part of Texas, persists over rocky hills and extensive plains, crossing in their extent widely different geological formations.

This belt of oak forest is the most prominent feature of the county. It forms part of the horizon from every eminence. The margins of this forest on both sides are exceedingly irregular, deeply indented by narrow prairies, while points of timber run out for several miles into the general prairie like promontories of a bold coast. The timber of these woody promontories is as valuable as it is conveniently distributed.

Austin county has no metallic ores, except some low ridges of gravel the debris of ferruginous sandstone, the history of which has not been traced. An occasional boulder of the same rock is the only indication of geological drift at least in a state not comminuted. There are no primitive rocks. Sandstone of a coarse and durable texture underlies the hills in thin horizontal strata which conform on the opposite sides of the hills and valleys; showing that the valleys are the effect of erosion. The fossils in these rocks are eocene or miocene. The clays above the sandstone are filled with nodules of indurated chalk. There are a great variety of soils. The black calcareous and carbonaceous clay, known as black prairie, the most peculiar soil of Texas, predominates. But there are sandy soils of several varieties. Each kind of soil is found in areas of irregular shape and of all sizes from roods to square leagues, and these areas are intermingled more intricately if possible than the timber and prairie. They do not conform to the present hills and valleys, and must be the formation of a former geological period. All the soils of the county are cultivated and prove fertile. The alluvial valley of Mill creek is the sediment from the present soil and is black clay. It shows the same phenomenon remarked in other streams of Texas that when the country was uninhabited the sediment which subsided to form the soil of the valleys was clay and humus without sand; but since cultivation, depasturing and the washing of roads has greatly increased the degradation of the soil, the alluvial deposits are now sand with but little clay or humus. The Brazos botton, that is, the alluvial valley of the river, has an average width

of three miles. It is composed of red alluvium brought from the high plains of the northwest and is more than 50 feet deep. This river also throws out more sand than formerly. The bottom is of great fertility, and overgrown with a continuous forest of trees common to such localities. The ash, the elm, cottonwood, hackberry and numerous species of undergrowth equally met with in the Mississippi bottom but the black and sweet gum are wanting, and neither white oak, beech, or cypress appear in its whole course. Petrified trees occur in the hilly parts of the county in the soil above the clay. They are nearly all apparently of the same species now found growing in this locality, and from their positions dispersed over sandy prairies indicate that the forest was anciently more extensive than in recent ages, or that the distribution of woodland and prairie was different. Some of these petrifications embrace the entire trunk and larger limbs of trees. Some indicate a tropical growth apparently ebony, and small patches of white coral are incrusting on some.

The remarkably picturesque scenery of this county has not changed in its general outline in half a century that the plow and ax have been busy here. Not only the indestructible hills and valleys remain, and not only the springs and streams flow on as of yore in the same channels, but the groves and trees that emphasized the hills and spread their friendly shade in the valleys have been so far spared by the woodman that there is no difficulty in recognizing the scene as it was in primeval times. The scarcity of timber as it appeared to the early emigrants from the forest covered States of the east, and the beauty of the groves which impressed even the rudest men, sufficed to restrain the wanton destruction of trees. The cessation of the prairie fires has allowed the younger growth to rise, and we have now, I believe, more trees than at first.

But some notable features of the landscape have changed or disappeared. The prairies in the vernal season were then as smooth as the best kept lawn, a living green and bedecked with an astonishing profusion of wild flowers. Herds of deer incredible in numbers fed undisturbed on every hill and in every valley. Herds of buffalo detached from the great northern herds, ranged nearly to the coast and were occasionally seen on the rolling prairies of Mill creek. In the winter of 1825-6 several of these animals were killed by the early settlers a mile or two north of the present village of Travis, in the valley of a little stream called from this circumstance "Buffalo Creek," since which time the buffalo has been no more seen in this county. In the primitive scenery the most noble living feature, though not the one most frequently seen, was the wild horses. They were truly "wilder

than the wild deer;" but secure in their speed, they roamed at will, long affording a noble sport in the chase for their capture, but at the same time they were a serious annoyance in their power to tempt their domestic fellows to the freedom of the plains.

The minor streams of water were then all chains of pools of clear water, reflecting the blue of the sky, and were seen in every valley, nestled among reeds and rushes, or reflecting the trees of overhanging groves. In the winter time the prairies wore a sombre yellow, but rolled in waves before the wind, like fields of ripened grain. But they rarely escaped the annual prairie fires, which swept over the whole country, except the shaded ground in the densely wooded valleys. When these fires were running, the clouds of smoke rolled up from so great an expanse as to rival the clouds in magnitude, and at night, lit up by glittering lines of fire miles in length, the spectacle was one of the most sublime that the world affords. The fire sometimes raced with dangerous speed before a dry north wind; but in the history of all Texas I have heard of only two instances of people having lost their lives, unable to elude the fire. Neither of them was in this county. Property was not so secure from its ravages, and the fences of the early settlers were particularly liable to be destroyed. Behind the fire the ground was black, and I well remember the black hills of winter and the darkness of the woods through which the flames had passed.

Flocks of wild fowl, birds of passage from the far north, greatly exceeding their present numbers, made their winter abode in this unpeopled retreat. Beasts of prey were not wanting to add an element of uncertain danger, but of certain annoyance. The setting of the sun was every evening saluted by a chorus of howling wolves, which assembled by that signal for their nightly prowling, and frequently through the night, summer and winter, called each other with the same dismal summons. The tremulous scream of the panther often came up from the darkest recesses of the forest in the dusk of the evening, and this stealthy foe was the most feared of any of the denizens of the woods. The cry of this ferocious creature resembles the human voice in distress, and was sometimes mistaken for that of a person lost and calling for assistance. But notwithstanding many adventures and some severe encounters with this and other wild beasts, I believe no person lost their lives by such means in this county. The loss of domestic animals by their depredations, however, long continued to be a heavy burden to the early settlers.

Such were the scenes which greeted the first Americans who, with their families, fifty-three years ago pitched their tents in this valley and called it home. They were the first

of Austin's colonists, and their numbers were continually reinforced until within two or three years they had the three hundred families which Austin had contracted with the Mexican government to settle in Texas. But these three hundred dispersed themselves in small settlements over a wide area. The names of a majority of those who first pitched upon the section of country now included in Austin county are as follows: Abner Kuykendall and sons, Horatio Chriesman, William Robbins, Early Robbins, Moses Shipman, David Shipman, William Prator, James Orrick, J. M. Pennington, Samuel Kennedy, Isam Belcher, and David Talley. These settled on or near the west bank of the Brazos, above the mouth of Mill creek, between the latter end of 1823 and the beginning of 1825.

In 1824 Mrs. Cummings and her three sons, John, James and William, settled on Mill creek a mile or two above its mouth. There the Cummings brothers built a saw and grist mill propelled by the water of Mill creek. This was the first mill of the kind erected in Texas. About the same time Joel Lakey became the first settler on Caney creek. The following list of names embraces most of the colonists who settled at San Felipe between the spring of 1823 and the beginning of the year 1827: John McFarland, Archilles McFarland, Thomas Davis, Joshua Parker, Dr. Nuckles, Joseph White, Thomas H. Borden, Thomas M. Duke, Seth Ingram, H. H. League, Alexander Calvit, Johnathan C. Peyton, Wm. Pettus, Freeman Pettus, James Hope, James Baird, Oliver Jones, W. C. White, James Knight, Stephen Richardson, Wm. Smithers, Mrs. Jane Wilkins, Bartlet Sims, Mills M. Battle, Henry Cheeves, George Brown (called "Mustang Brown"), William Cooper (a cousin of the novelist, Fennimore Cooper), and Sylvanus Castleman.

The first colonists were, as a class, men of intelligence and enlarged views, and of the high and resolute spirit which characterized the leaders in the western migration of our race. They compare favorably with any founders of new settlements which any age or nation can produce. To prove it we have but to point to the republic and State which they erected, to the laws they established, and to the posterity they have left. They undertook an enterprise which for magnitude and the difficulties attending it has no parallel in the past century, and they accomplished all they undertook. When we consider the means and appliances which were at their disposal, we must be astonished no less at the speed than at the success of their work. When we reflect that in 1776 the white settlements had not crossed the Alleghaney Mountains, that thirty years afterwards the steamboat had not been invented, and yet that forty-six years after the de-

claration of American independence the Americans were laying the foundations of a new State on the banks of the Brazos, we must abate from our comparative claims to a progressive spirit; and we must admit that if the means at command are to be considered in comparing the achievements of men, the latter half of the famous century which closes to-day does by no means excel the first.

The colonists arrived here in wagons, after a tedious journey of months, with only the few implements and short supplies which their scanty transportation enabled them to bring. As for provisions they had to look to their rifles and the wild game of the prairie and woods. The earliest bread they could expect was when it should be grown and gathered from yet unfurrowed fields.

In the summer of 1823 the Tonkawa Indians, who professed friendship for the whites, stole the horses of one of the settlers on the Brazos, below the Labahia road. The Indians were pursued by the owner of the property and two or three of his neighbors, and being reinforced at San Felipe, then just founded, continued the pursuit fifty miles further down the river, to the camp of the Tonkawa tribe, where they found and recovered the horses. The chief delivered the thieves to the settlers, who tied them and gave them a sound flogging, which correct and common sense proceeding settled further trouble with them. Soon afterwards, however, the Waco Indians stole all their horses, and made their escape across the Yegua river, beyond which pursuit at that time was impracticable.

In 1823 Austin returned from Mexico, where he had been to get his contract ratified, which was done by several successive governments which overthrew each other during the several months that he was there. In the same year he laid off the town of San Felipe, in this county, for the future colonial capital.

It surprises us that the colonists in some instances failed to raise bread the first year or two, more especially as there has been no failure of crops in Austin county for fifty years past during which it has been cultivated. The explanation is to be found in minor details of cultivation, and of soil and season, familiar to us, but unknown at that day. The same phenomenon appears in the first settlement of the Eastern States. The first settlers arrived here at the close of a series of dry years, and their first fields were on the uplands. Had they planted earlier in the season, it is probable that they would have succeeded from the first.

In the summer of 1823 and afterwards there was war with the Carankawa Indians on the Colorado river, and men went from this settlement to the fight, but the hostilities did not

reach here. The colonists continued to arrive in numbers, but no census was taken for years, and I am not aware of any notable event connected with the arrival of any particular family or families. In 1824 Stephen F. Austin was commissioned political chief of the colony, a vague office which he already virtually held.

In July, 1824, the land office was opened at San Felipe, and titles issued to the colonists for the liberal portion of land allowed by the contract of colonization: to each head of a family a square league (4,427 acres) and one labor (177 acres); the smaller tract designed for cultivation, and the larger for pasturage. The colonists chose their land wherever it suited them. The land office was conducted upon an excellent system. The surveys were well made, considering the appliances then in use, and are well described in the titles. There is no difficulty at the present day in finding the surveys of 1824, with no other direction than those contained in the titles. One of the surveyors Horatio Chriesman, is still living. It is much to be regretted that the lands were not required to be laid in squares, with the lines run to the cardinal points. The early colonists were excusable in following the Spanish want of system in this respect, especially as it coincided at the time with their individual interests; but it remains a blot upon the Republic and State of Texas that no legislative assembly has had sufficient intelligence to recognize the importance of sectionizing the public lands.

The years 1822, 1823 and 1824 were the rough times in Texas. Commerce had not yet followed up the pioneer advance of civilization. For new clothes the colonists had buckskin, and in the way of provisions, as I heard one of them remark, they had a fat deer for meat and a poor one for bread. In some of the settlements where the hostile Indians restricted the hunters, there was suffering. One who was employed as a hunter for some of the families has left on record that the children used to run to meet him when he returned from the chase, and that which had most tried his feelings in his life was the looks of the children when the meat was exhausted and he failed to bring any. But for the most part, with the cattle they had brought and the great abundance of game, there was no hunger. Either in 1823 or 1824 some of the colonists went to Matamoros and brought thence, packed on mules, flour and seed corn, and an abundance of bread and meat has been no more wanting.

The want of government was scarcely felt among a people accustomed to govern themselves. They could extemporize a public power for any exigency, one of which occurred this year, 1824. A Mexican horse drover was robbed and

wounded by a party of his countrymen on the Atascasito road, a few miles west of the Colorado. The wounded drover escaping, gave notice to the settlers, who pursued and overtook some part of the robbers on the right bank of the Brazos river, at a point in this county opposite Groce's, and fixed their heads on poles by the roadside, as was the custom in the United States at that time in punishing highwaymen.

But there are some affairs of government not so easily extemporized. The Mexican law did not authorize marriage by any official other than a Catholic priest. There was no Catholic priest in the colony. In this dilemma the colonists hit upon an expedient which might be adopted with advantage in older countries. The parties signed a bond in writing, in the presence of a magistrate, wherein the marriage vows were supplemented by a penalty of many thousand dollars: but to obviate clerical objections, the church ceremonies were to be performed when the priest should arrive. The clerk's office of our county is the depository of many old Spanish archives of the colonial times; among others the file of marriage bonds, near a hundred in number, which form the record of marriages for the first seven or eight years. The present custom in the United States of marriage by a verbal agreement made in the presence of a justice of the peace, without priest or bond, is a doubtful improvement.

The year 1824 is memorable for the adoption of the Federal Republican Constitution of Mexico, and that in this year Texas was attached to Coahuila until it should be in a position to form a separate State.

The year 1825 is memorable for the great influx of immigrants and the number of new colonies formed. The Legislature of Coahuila and Texas met at Saltillo in February, and on the 24th of March passed a general colonization law, under which many new colonies were formed, but Austin's colony continued to be the principal settlement.

The year 1826, which was the fiftieth year of American independence, was celebrated in the best style the colony then afforded. At Beason's Ferry, on the Colorado, where the town of Columbus now stands, there was a barbecue, which was attended by some of the colonists from different settlements for fifty miles around. The Indians attacked Gonzales on that day while many of the settlers were absent attending the barbecue, and broke up the settlement there, killing two men. This year, 1826, a commissioner arrived in Austin's colony, from the State government of Coahuila and Texas, to issue titles to five hundred families additional to the first three hundred.

In 1827 a new State constitution was adopted and a species of county organization perfected, which organization, with

little change, still subsists in the Mexican States. By this arrangement Austin's colony was divided into jurisdictions, in each of which a court styled the "Ayuntamiento" was appointed, consisting of a president and six commissioners, with two secretaries, with power very similar to our present county courts. In this year, 1827, Austin contracted to settle three hundred additional families on the coast.

In 1828 I find an estimate of the expenses of the Ayuntamiento, or county court, to be \$750 for the year, which includes the rent of a house and the hire of a secretary. The pay of the president and six commissioners was altogether \$200, and it contains an apology for this item.

In the summer of 1829 Capt. Abner Kuykendall, of this settlement, in command of ten or twelve men, several of whom were also from here, encountered a party of Waco Indians on the west bank of the Colorado river, a few miles above where La Grange now stands, and drove them into the river, killing several. In September or October of this same year two companies of volunteers, raised in different parts of the colony, but a large proportion from here, under Captains Bartlet Sims and Oliver Jones, both commanded by Capt. Abner Kuykendall, went against the Indians encamped in force at the mouth of the San Saba. There was a running fight, but the Indians escaped. It may be a way-mark in the course of general history to note that the Indians still depredate upon that locality.

In 1829 there was a printing office established in San Felipe. I find a bill for printing presented to the Ayuntamiento by one G. B. Cotton. It seems cheap enough, but the economical court cut it down one-third. In the same year there was a newspaper printed at San Felipe called the *Gazette of Texas*; afterwards called the *Mexican Nation*.

In this year, 1829, set in a reactionary movement in Mexico. It is impossible, in the compass of an address, to give an intelligible summary of the confused wrangling, which was called the government, in Mexico; but without such knowledge, the movements of so small a section as a single county could not be understood. I must therefore refer to the history of Texas at large, and presume that the course of national events is already known. The monarchical and despotic party regained the ascendancy under President Bustamante, and the trouble with the central government of Mexico set in soon after. The State government of Coahuila and Texas remained republican, and got along well enough for several years.

In 1830 arrived the long-looked for priest, Father Michael Muldoon; fortunately for the colony, a kind-hearted, liberal-minded old gentleman, who did everything he could for the

colony and nothing against it. He baptized everybody and performed the marriage ceremony for all who wished to be married, took his pay in cattle, the legal tender of that day, and drank his wine merrily. He wrote for the little newspaper, *The Mexican Nation*, many humorous and entertaining articles, both in prose and verse. He is kindly remembered by all who knew him. He was called away a year or two afterwards and no other ever took his place.

But the colonists soon found that there was such a thing as spiritual hunger. The Americans are at heart a religious people. So early as 1824 a methodist minister had preached west of the Brazos, in 1829 a sunday school was organized in San Felipe and preaching became more and more frequent throughout Texas. Austin viewed the arrival of protestant ministers with great apprehensions that it would embroil the colony in trouble with the bigoted clergy of Mexico. But not the least disturbance ever arose in consequence of it.

In 1830 the dictator, Bustamente, issued a decree forbidding the further immigration of American colonists. He began sending troops into Texas, and stationing them at different posts, apparently to overawe the people. The state government of Coahuila and Texas did not regard his decree and sent commissioners Madero and Carbajal to Nacogdoches to make surveys and issue titles as usual. They were arrested by Col. Bradburn, a renegade American who commanded at Anahuac, a post on Galveston Bay. He also deposed the Alcalde of the Municipality of Liberty. (now Liberty County) and arrested and imprisoned without cause several citizens, to release whom or obtain for them a trial before the civic authorities. Colonel Frank Johnson at the head of an armed party from Austin's colony marched to Anahuac; but failing to effect any thing peaceably he resorted to force. At his call Capt. Kuykendall marched from here with a company, and other armed parties having also joined Col. Johnson he was speedily enabled to accomplish his purpose. All the garrisons of Bustamente were broken up in a similar manner.

At the same time the republican party regained power in Mexico and dispatched Col. Mexia with troops and an armed vessel to Texas. He proved to be a gentleman of intelligence and a sincere republican; seeing the nature of the grievances, he redressed them. He came to San Felipe in 1832, and was received with a popular ovation. His memory is held in respect.

The whole number of Americans then in Texas, has been estimated at 20,000. The inhabitants of this section, now

embraced in this county, numbered, probably, near one thousand. In 1832 the state legislature made all municipal officers elective.

The Ayuntamiento, or County Court of this jurisdiction for that year were Horatio Chriesman, president; Regidores (commissioners) P. D. McNeal, Wm. Robinson, Josiah H. Bell, Jesse Grimes, Martin Allen and Abner Kuykendall, *sindicos*, Henry Cheeves and Rawson Alley, a selection, which for intelligence and character of its members has not been surpassed since. The town of San Felipe de Austin was a village of two or three hundred inhabitants, but in this small settlement there was more intelligence and high character than can be found at present in any community of similar number. The circumstances of the colony affording, as they did, a certain road to wealth, and a prospect of distinction in the great affairs of which it was becoming the theatre, had drawn from the United States many young men of talent and ambition. Among them the names of David G. Burnet, the brothers W. H. and Patrick C. Jack, W. H. and John A. Wharton, R. M. Williamson, W. B. Travis, Thos. J. Chambers, Ira R. Lewis, Mosely Baker, Gail Borden, and others, are historical. A few of the old residents are still living, among whom I observe Horatio Chriesman, Charles B. Stewart and John P. Borden. The archives and documents of the colonial government, manifest by the style and correctness of their writing a grade of intelligence in the officials of that time rather above than below the bureaux of the present. A strangely erroneous impression prevails in the east, that the advanced settlers in the great western emigration are, as a class rude in manners, and ignorant of letters. But the fact is very much the reverse, the proportion of men of intelligence is much greater in the western states than in the east.

Men do not move to the unoccupied lands of the west by classes. A few are led by love of adventure, but they are of all classes, and every grade of intelligence. The leading motive, however, in the masses, is to secure homes and better the prospects of their posterity. If they are distinguished from older settlements by any salient characteristics the comparison is in their favor. They are of a high and self-reliant spirit, with the accompanying virtues of truth and generosity. It has been so from the earliest times, and it is so now. America is so distinguished in comparison with Europe, Europe is so characterized above Asia, the Western States of America have the advantage of the Eastern in this respect, and the newer counties of our own state, have a greater proportion of intelligence than the older. I have been led into this digression, and in this connection because Texas has suffered from this prejudice of the east, more

than other states in their early settlement, and I think, more unjustly. Recent immigrants to the west finding themselves agreeably disappointed in the character of the people among whom they come are disposed, rather than relinquish a rooted prejudice, to charge upon the still earlier settlements a state of society which, in fact, never existed. Most of you in this audience have been acquainted with many of the early settlers, and I desire to put on record that they were intelligent and correct people.

The village capital at San Felipe was, at the time I am now speaking of, (1832,) well supplied with the merchandise common to the United States at that period, and was the most considerable trading point in Texas, except San Antonio. Goods were now imported from the United States by way of Matagorda, at the mouth of the Colorado, Velasco, at the mouth of the Brazos, and Anahuac, near the mouth of the Trinity, on Galveston Bay. Previously, the chief route of commerce was by pack mules from Nacogdoches to Matamoros, following the "Cushata Trace," a noted highway in early times, which crossed this country from east to west. The route was at first traced out by the Cushata Indians (strangely enough on trading expeditions) between the points named. Their course was guided by prominent landmarks, of which some prominent groves and a solitary mound in the prairie near the Barnard still retain their name. Their route became a beaten trail, and at length a highway, along which Mexican merchants used to conduct their primitive commerce with trains numbering, sometimes, hundreds of pack mules. The old "Cushata trace" is referred to as a land mark in titles and deeds of conveyance, the point where it crossed Mill creek still retains the name, but of the road its self scarce a trace remains.

In 1833 a convention assembled at San Felipe from all the colonies in Texas to frame a State constitution, and petition the general government to receive Texas as a separate state. Stephen F. Austin was sent to the city of Mexico with the petition, but instead of being received with the courtesy due his mission the senseless despotism at the capital imprisoned him in a dungeon.

The spring and summer of 1833 was remarkable for great floods in all the rivers of Texas. There were no indications of such overflows having occurred for centuries before, and there has been no inundation since, that would at all compare with it. The rain was unexampled throughout the next winter, rendering the ground so boggy that the primitive wagon transportation of the time was nearly entirely stopped. The Brazos and Colorado rivers ran together across the flat prairies near the coast, and men navigated from one to the

other in a skiff. That extraordinary season of rain was preceded by a strong east wind, which continued for seven weeks. In November, 1833, my father, John W. Kenney, with his family, arrived on the Brazos, and built his cabin where the town of Washington was afterwards built. He explored the river in a canoe and brought up from Velasco a load of salt which was manufactured there out of sea water. Transportation by wagons was impossible at that season on account of the recent great overflow, and the incessant rains. The next year he removed to this neighborhood, where he resided until his death, thirty years afterwards. In 1834 a camp meeting was held in this neighborhood, and was largely attended. Such means were then necessary to assemble a numerous congregation for religious worship, and long continued to be the principal scenes of religious revivals. "The groves were Gods first temples," and those great and earnest meetings, under the high arches of the primeval forest, afforded a presence and surroundings eminently conducive to religious awe. They were a great factor in the social affairs of early times.

In this year, General Almonte visited Texas, by order of the Federal government, to examine and report upon the condition of the colonies. He reported the number of inhabitants in Texas to be about 21 000, and the trade to amount to 1,600 000. He doubtless over rated the trade, and probably somewhat underrated the number of the inhabitants. In the section, now included in this county, the population was probably near one thousand. No estimate of the number of negroes was made, but I suppose that in this county rather more than a third of the population was black. Some of the earliest colonists brought negroes with them. Mexico did not absolutely prohibit slavery, but it was understood that the servitude was not to be perpetual, and the softer name of *peon*, was at first applied to the slaves. An eccentric gentleman, Dr. Punchard, one of the early settlers in this county, used to boast that he was the first man who brought negroes to Texas and called them *slaves*. Only a few were liberated under the Mexican law. One family, I remember, continued to live at San Felipe and their freedom was respected through all changes of government afterwards. I was told many years ago by Youngs Coleman, one of the earliest colonists, and who is, I believe, still living, that Stephen F. Austin, in a conversation with him, remarked that if he were legislating for posterity he would exclude negroes from Texas. He foresaw great trouble in this connection, but probably thought it to be much further in the future than the hurried march of modern events has realized. General Houston entertained similar presentiments, He

was reported to have said, "Slavery will retreat to Texas." adding, gloomily, "and here, its dreadful eddies will whirl." Negro slaves had been owned in the early settlement of all the States of the Union, previously with more or less advantage. In this section, negro slavery greatly assisted the settlement of the country. It afforded a certain control of concentrated labor, and supplied the wants of domestic service, both unattainable by any other means in very sparsely peopled new countries.

In 1835 the war with Mexico was fast approaching. Santa Anna had overthrown the Federal constitution of 1824, and united all the powers and departments of government in his single hand. The states of Zacatecas and Coahuila and Texas resisted. Zacatecas was subdued with a terrible massacre. Coahuila accepted the situation, and Texas was left alone. Meetings were held in all the colonies; that of San Felipe met on the 22d of June, and passed stirring resolutions in support of the constitution of 1824. Committees were appointed to look out for the public interests; there was a peace party also, and at that time a strong one, who feared the power of the president, and counselled keeping quiet and avoiding, if possible, attracting the attention of the contending parties in Mexico. But the spirit of the Americans was too high at that time to bear, what seemed to them, an intolerable insult, that the president should, by a proclamation, set aside the constitution and reconstruct the government.

On the first of September Stephen F. Austin arrived from the city of Mexico. His arrival was so unexpected that he was "received as one risen from the dead." General Cós, commanding for Santa Anna, landed an army on Matagorda Bay the same month and marched to Goliad and San Antonio. Austin declared that war was the only alternative to preserve either political liberty or the landed possession of the colonists. In a speech at San Felipe he several times repeated "will you give up the homes you have made for old age and the toil of half a lifetime?" The war immediately opened by an affair at Gonzales on the 29th of September. At the same time a council was formed at San Felipe to govern provisionally. The President of that council was R. R. Royal. Volunteers flocked to the war in the west. Goliad was taken on the 9th of October, and on the 27th of the same month a severe engagement took place at Mission Concepcion on the San Antonio river a few miles below the city. It was in that battle that a young man from this county named Henry Karnes acquired great reputation for personal courage and address in an encounter which he sustained single handed against a number of the enemies dragoons.

One the 16th day of October a consultation of delegates from all Texas met at San Felipe and organized a provisional government, which dispatched volunteer troops to the west. On the 12th of December, San Antonio was taken after several days fighting. Gen. Cos capitulated gave up the town and was allowed to retire with his army beyond the Rio Grande. This battle contributed very much to inspire confidence in our arms. But perhaps it also promoted the serious military error of contempt for the enemy, which indeed subsequently came near proving fatal to the fortunes of Texas. Among the incidents of my earliest recollection was the return of the volunteers from the taking of San Antonio. They brought among other things several grape shot which were given me for playthings. I remember wondering how men played with them. I have lived to see how it is done and bear an indifferent hand in the game, but cannot say that I consider it sport. A young man from this neighborhood performed several daring feats which I remember hearing highly spoken of years afterwards by those who witnessed them. His name was S. Y. Reams. He has lived to see a vigorous old age and still resides in this county.

In February 1836 Santa Anna advanced with a large army. Upon his entrance into San Antonio, the garrison, commanded by Col Travis, retired into the fort called the Alamo in the suburbs of the city, and there, with less than two hundred men, held the enemy in check in the hope of securing time for the colonists to rally in force sufficient to keep the war out of the settlements. While Santa Anna was besieging the Alamo the citizens of Texas were assembling both in arms and council. About the last of February two companies from San Felipe under Captains Mosely Baker and John Bird and one company from here under Captain Robert McNutt went to the rendezvous at Gonzales. At the same time a convention representing all settlements in Texas assembled at Washington on the Brazos, appointed General Houston Commander in Chief, and on the 2nd of March declared the independence of Texas. The volunteers who rendezvoused at Gonzales arrived at that place only in time to hear the last guns of the Alamo on the 6th of March. The heroic garrison held the fatal post until all were slain. I regret that I have been unable to get a list of those from this settlement who fell in that famous defense. The commander Col. Travis and several others were from San Felipe.

The hastily collected army at Gonzales under command of Gen. Houston, burned that village and retreated to the Colorado. There the advance of the Mexican army under General Sesma was confronted for several days. There the terrible news came of the surrender of Fannin's division

and their treacherous massacre by the enemy at Goliad. Houston retreated to San Felipe, which was likewise reduced to ashes. But instead of crossing the Brazos, he moved up the river on the west side and camped for twelve days. All the American families fled toward the Sabine, and the few roads and many unmarked routes were lined with people with every imaginable conveyance and with none. Some moving leisurely with all their effects, others, destitute of a day's provisions or a change of clothes, flying from the savage foe in a panic. Such a confused route of people was scarcely seen before in America. It was always known in common parlance and correctly described as "the runaway scrape." It is a remarkable fact that the farther from the danger the greater was the panic. In this county the families moved away more leisurely than from the Trinity. My father and one of his neighbors, James B. Pier, did not remove their families until Houston's army crossed the Brazos.

On the morning of April 7th, 1836, Santa Anna marched into the ashes of San Felipe. Capt Baker, with the companies from that place and vicinity, was posted on the east bank of the Brazos, where he had erected a breastwork and defended the passage of the river. Three men were on picket guard west of the river when the Mexican cavalry arrived. One whose name was Simpson was captured, the other two, I. L. Hill and James Bell, escaped in a canoe, crossing the river in a shower of bullets. Santa Anna established a battery on the bluff west of the river, and cannonaded Bakers' position for several days. The fire was returned with rifles, the distance being scarcely two hundred yards. On our part we lost one man; his name was Bricker. The enemy's loss is not known. A steamboat was loading cotton at Groce's plantation above San Felipe, where Houston crossed, and he made use of it to cross his army. It was then sent down the river and ran by the Mexican army at San Felipe, who were so much surprised at it, having never seen or heard of such a thing, that they did not fire at it until it was out of range. I believe that was the first steamboat which came so high up the Brazos, and it had no successor for several years.

Santa Anna marched down the river and crossed at Richmond. Houston followed, and on the 21st of April, at the battle of San Jacinto, victory declared for the fortunes of Texas, and ended her colonial history. Our army at San Jacinto numbered about seven hundred, of which near two hundred were from this county. Of these some half dozen are still with us and two are here to-day, John Ferrel and Nathaniel Reed. The remaining Mexican army retreated through the lower country, and Austin county has not since

seen an armed enemy. During the hostile occupation of the county, the Indians came to West Mill creek and carried off the mother and two little boys of a family who attempted to remain. The woman escaped after a short captivity, but the children were never afterward heard of.

The citizens returned to their homes in May, and many of them only got their corn planted in June, but fortunate rains secured their bread.

The burning of San Felipe proved a death blow to the town. The government of the Republic could not return to it, for the want of houses for immediate use, and went to Columbia. San Felipe was speedily in part rebuilt, and was the county seat of Austin county until 1847. The village was always popularly known and called by the name of San Felipe, or St. Phillip; but in the public records it is styled the town of Austin, and so continues to be styled, until the new capital of the Republic was located on the Colorado, when the name, together with the title and honors of the capital, were removed to that city.

The Congress of 1836 established precincts, nearly corresponding to the counties subsequently formed. In 1837 the counties were established. Austin county was defined with the limits which it retained until very recently. Two associate justices formed the county court. The first who presided in this county were Thomas Barnet and Robert Kleberg. Judge Kleburg is still living. The first District judge was R. M. Williamson, but the court only met in 1837 to adjourn. In March 1838 the first court was organized, Judge Benjamin C. Franklin presiding. The first grand jury was composed of men whose names are familiar in our domestic history. Three of them I notice are still living, Wm. P. Huff the foreman, James B. Pier and Frederick Grimes. John C. Watrous, who was afterwards federal judge of Texas, was admitted to the bar of the Republic at this term of the court. At the time of the revolution, Austin county, including that section east of the Brazos lately dismembered to form Waller county, had a population of about 1500. The ten years of Texian nationality were years of agricultural prosperity in this section. All that time Texas and Mexico were at war, with many expeditions to invade each other or to repel invasion, and a ceaseless Indian war raged along the near frontier. Austin county was shielded by surrounding settlements from becoming the theatre of hostilities, but furnished men to most of the numerous contests beyond her borders. In the spring of 1839 the Indians became very troublesome on the upper Brazos. A company went from this county commanded by Capt John Bird, and

about the last of May had a severe engagement with the savages near the junction of the Gabriel and Leona rivers. The enemy were about four hundred strong while Bird's company numbered only 32 in all, but after a battle which lasted four hours the enemy withdrew having lost near a hundred. On our part the loss was five killed and several wounded. Among the slain was Capt. Bird himself who fell early in the action struck by an arrow under the left arm while aiming his rifle. He exclaimed to his men "boys I am done; stand your ground and fight like men and the day is ours." He died immediately.

The same year a party of Indians came down East Mill creek, stole some horses and shot cattle, but did not kill any person, and they effected their own escape without punishment. This feeble raid proved to be the last of the prowling wild man in this county.

Austin county furnished men to the federal expedition of Col. Jordan in 1839-40. One of whom I remember was our schoolmaster Mr. Cummins; his departure gave us an unexpected holiday. I am sorry that I cannot do more to add his name to the lists of fame. He was abroad to some purpose in the world. Equally ready with sword and pen he served his country well, and lost his life at last in her defense; having fallen at Dawson's defeat on the Salado near San Antonio. Our quota was sent to the Santa Fe expedition of 1841; to the Mier expedition of 1842 and to numerous Indian campaigns. Business of various kinds led many men to the frontier of the actual settlements; the love of adventure led more to traverse the line of danger and numerous families of our early settlers lost one or more members who fell victims to Mexican and Indian hostility. Of the young men who went from this neighborhood fated never to return I may mention Hanks Kuykendall who fell at Mier in 1842, and James H. Kenney killed by Indians at Corpus Christi in 1845. Their loss was felt by their kindred as a lasting bereavement and deeply regretted by the whole community.

When the Republic was established in 1836-7 the churches were organized, schools every where opened, and my recollection is that both were much better attended than at present. Certain it is that the early settlers did not fail to educate their children and the churches had a large proportion of the people.

After the invasion of 1836 the war did not assume proportions to interrupt the pursuits of peace in this county. Steamboats ascended the Brazos occasionally, but the regular trade was maintained to Houston fifty miles distant by ox wagons; a slow but cheap and convenient means of transportation.

Annexation to the United States was hailed with joy by the people. In this county the vote was 380, and nearly unanimous for that measure. I believe that there was no State in which the sentiment of attachment to the Union was so strong as it was in Texas previous to annexation. An attachment which was not weakened for several years.

From 1845 to 1860, that is during the fifteen years from annexation until the Confederate war the history of this county is the uneventful history of peace. The Indian frontier with its never ceasing hostilities removed further and further toward the setting sun. The campaign of 1846-7 wound up the long war with Mexico, and when the volunteers returned in 1848 the weapons of war were consigned to neglect and rust. The people of this county turned to build and plow in the full conviction that they would never again be disturbed by war. The population of this county in 1846 was probably 2500. In 1850 the first census was taken and showed 3841 inhabitants of which 2286 were white, 1549 negro slaves and six free negroes. A line of Steamboats was established in the Brazos which continued for a year or two a regular navigation from Velasco to Washington. The threatening attitude of national politics about this time was regarded here with surprise only, but the course pursued by the United States in regard to the Santa Fe territory was received both with astonishment and resentment. It had not been believed before that the United States could be guilty of deliberate injustice and annexation began to be regretted. But there was no check to the material prosperity of the country and our county advanced rapidly in population and rural improvements. Railroads long talked of were now commenced, and in 1858 the Central, which was the second railroad commenced in the State, was completed as far as Hempstead in this county, and thence forward superseded both wagon and boat. In 1860 the population of Austin county reached 10139 of which 6200 were white. About this time the settlements gained so far on the primitive order of things that the wild animals were no more troublesome and the annual prairie fires ceased to dispute the fields of nature with the husbandman.

The end of this peaceful and prosperous decade, and the end of the year 1860, brought the sudden question of secession and the breaking out of the great Confederate war. Our county was not noted for any person or event to distinguish it favorably or otherwise from other similar sections involved in the struggle. When the delegates to the secession convention were chosen a majority of the votes cast were in favor of the measure, but they were not a majority of all the voters of the county, and one of the delegates refus-

ed on that account to attend the convention, though advocating the measure himself. During the war the county furnished several companies and scattering recruits to every part of the contest. The rendezvous at the first meeting of the troops was at Hempstead, then in Austin county, and our volunteers were dispersed through so many organizations that their number is not indicated by the companies ostensibly raised here. One company of infantry commanded by Capt. Z. Hunt, with Lieutenants Mathews, Harris and Campbell served efficiently in the famous division commanded by Maj. Gen. Walker. A battalion of cavalry from this county commanded by Lieut. Colonel Edwin Waller served with distinction in many campaigns west of the Mississippi; several companies of the 21st and 24th cavalry were principally made up here and this county supplied a very large quota to the garrisons of the coast. Once during the war a batch of 300 prisoners was sent here for safe keeping and sickness breaking out among them in the heat of summer rendered their stay disagreeable. At that time the enemy had adopted their policy of refusing to exchange prisoners. But the exchange of these was at length effected for half their number of confederates confined in New Orleans. The civil law was not suspended in this county during the war. Business was of course extremely interrupted. A precarious and deficient commerce was maintained with Matamoros, and a scant supply of some articles was brought by blockade runners, but for the most part the country had to rely upon domestic manufactures. The spinning wheels and hand looms which had been for some years disused were again brought into service and probably for the last time in the history of America, many handicrafts whose vocation has been usurped by factories and commerce once more plied their callings, and new inventions were not wanting to meet the exigencies of the situation. So that withal, though there was much inconvenience, there was no suffering in this county during the war.

Near the end of the war the troops were assembled at points near Hempstead, and when the final collapse of the confederacy became known the army broke up in a mutinous but not disorderly manner, and the men dispersed to their homes so quietly that no robberies or other disorders were perpetrated though above twenty thousand confederate soldiers were scattered uncontrolled through the country. The immediate result of the war was to turn loose all the negroes, numbering then near four thousand. But this did not produce any disturbance, they wandered around for a while in an aimless manner, but were soon obliged, by want of food, to go to work, which they performed more inefficiently than

before, but better than was expected. The fanatical portion of the conquering party were much disappointed that the negroes did not attempt some brutal outrages upon the white people. Emissaries made speeches at Hempstead and other points inciting the negroes to murder, burn houses, and commit nameless atrocities. But the negroes manifested no such disposition and up to this time no ill feeling has sprung up between the blacks and whites.

The enormity called re-construction affected this county less than almost any other which had a considerable negro population. The military commandant by good chance was not a fanatical partisan, and no exactions were made beyond what was levied on the State at large. To secure the election of radical officers a sufficient number of the white people were prohibited from voting. But it is believed that the votes in this county were not falsely counted. Though the result of the election was kept a secret, neither the number of votes cast nor for whom they were cast was ever published. The general commanding announced the officers chosen by himself without regard to the votes, and notoriously contrary to the results of the elections as reported to him. The county officers of Austin county, though thus appointed, did not render themselves odious, nor depart widely from the routine duties customary in those offices. The heavy and unnecessary taxes levied by this monstrous derision of republican government were common to the whole State. But no special exactions were made in this county, and if the money ostensibly raised for public purposes was embezzled or misapplied I have not been able to discover it. The black republican or carpet-bag government in this State was guilty of so many crimes that it would seem but mere railery to enumerate them. But in this county at least they were innocent of some of the worst features of despotism. In this county there was no false imprisonment. Private affairs were not meddled with; no one was prevented from following any occupation or calling that he chose, and no one was hindered by any direct or indirect exercise of power from expressing his opinions and sentiments freely on all subjects whatever. If all future tyrannies shall leave these capital articles in the natural constitution of liberty unsuppressed, freedom will never be wholly extinguished. The grievances chiefly complained of in this county have been the absurd mockery of justice in negro juries, and the total neglect to keep the public roads in repair.

Since the restoration of popular government, 1873, the voters of this county have, in a great measure, discarded political parties in the choice of county officers, and the administration of county affairs has been universally satisfactory.

There are many subjects which can only be understood by a separate resume devoted to them which would far exceed our limits. But in conclusion I may touch upon some of them.

The health of this county has undoubtedly improved since the primitive settlement. It was then the common lot, that families, especially new comers were sick in the summer and fall; it is now exceptional.

Common schools have always been maintained amply sufficient for the elementary education of the children. But few persons have grown up ignorant in this county, and those few can not attribute their ignorance to want of opportunity to learn. No college or high school has been attempted in the county.

A general opinion prevails in America that the western advance of the settlements is accompanied by an increase of rain. We do not perceive any change in this respect.

Venomous reptiles and insects have greatly decreased. The rattle snake once common is now very rarely seen.

I believe that all other species of serpents have been equally reduced. The formidable tarantula and centipede which were a novelty to American settlers, causing them often to be mentioned in connection with this country, and filling the imaginations of people in the east with dire apparitions, have almost disappeared. Their history is, that in all the settlements of this county no person's life has been lost from a bite or a sting of either. Some troublesome flies of the *tabanae* have also lessened if not disappeared, and but few if any insect pests have increased.

This county has been reasonably exempt from crime. Two highway robberies only have been committed in the fifty-three years since its first settlement. House breaking has been very rare, and theft from houses so little known as to be never anticipated, locks are but little used. Theft of cattle and horses, though by no means so rare, has not been common. For offenses of all grades since colonial days there have been fourteen hundred indictments 393 felonies and 1902 misdemeanor, 58 have been sentenced to the State prison. Only one has been hanged by law. Two have been taken from the custody of the law and hanged by mobs. Murder and manslaughter has been rare compared with other counties. There are forty indictments for murder in the course of our history, 14 not tried; but it is not creditable to our county that only one of those tried has been hanged by law, and he a negro slave. Most of the homicides have been in fights, but the murder of Mrs. Roach in Feb. 1869 was an atrocity as cowardly and shocking as any country has to deplore, and a recent murder reaches the extreme grade of parricide. In the pro-

ceedings of the colonial Ayuntamiento I find complaint of the number of homicides, the difficulty of keeping prisoners and the want of authorized tribunals within reach. We have jails and courts enough, but I apprehend that we are as lax in punishing criminals as were the ill provided colonists. Crime seems neither to have increased nor diminished in proportion to the population.

Previous to the confederate war there were no poor people needing support at the public expense. The number in the last few years has averaged six every year costing altogether for each year \$350. Beggary is unknown.

The population of Austin county in 1870 was 15000 of which 8500 were white and 6574 black. Since then the county has been divided, that part of it east of the Brazos river being cut off to form Waller county. The proportionate reduction of our population is not known, but we judge from the vote at the general election in February last which reached 2425, that the present population is not far from 15000 of which about 2500 are negroes.

There are in this county about 2700 tax payers and they pay tax on \$2,326,000, part of the property is exempt from taxation. Altogether the property of the county averages nearly or quite \$1000, to the family, and about \$200 to the individual. The land in this county is rendered for taxes at 270,101 acres, valued at \$1,371,487 which is over five dollars per acre, general average. The number of land owners on the tax rolls is 1270, from which it appears that about half the people own real estate and that their average possession is over 200 acres to the family or tax payer. Wealth is very evenly distributed. There are twelve estates of over \$10,000 each and the twenty largest estates average \$13,000.

Such in brief is now our status, and such has been our history. I could wish that this summary was more comprehensive and at the same time more condensed and perspicuous, especially as it is designed to be preserved to a future far more remote than its merits could attain.

In conclusion we may briefly consider the present occasion. The Fourth of July 1776 is one of those great epochs which stand as way marks in the course of time, denoting the moment of transition from an old to a new era in the vast affairs of the world itself. From the declaration of American Independence went out a great and yet increasing influence, which has permeated every remotest corner of civilization. This day, long selected by custom for annual celebration, has numbered away the years of a mighty century and now is set up "for time to count his ages by." As a traveler looking back from some great eminence and seeing at a glance many miles of the way which he has placed with toil-

ing steps behind him, always pauses to muse awhile on the prospect: so looking back from the conventional stand of a hundred years we may well pause with emotion to contemplate the course of events in the receded century. It was the custom of an ancient nation to celebrate a solemn festival at the end of every fifty years, the longest period of the world's affairs which could be embraced in the memory of living men. The interest and solemnity of the occasion must have been enhanced by the fact that of those who witnessed it but few had seen the preceding occasion, and of those who now participated but few could hope to witness the succeeding one. Such a memorial festival the course of history seems to have allotted to Texas.

In celebrating the Centennial of American Independence we celebrate the semi-centennial of the settlement of Texas. There are those present who relate to us from memory the living oral history of that early time. They were young then; when fifty years ago, from their rude camps and cabins in the wild valleys of this country they assembled to a primitive feast in commemoration of the great era which had struck on the horologe of time in 1776. It was a living story then. Their old men had seen the grand era and its earliest fruits. They had cultivated the tree of liberty until its far reaching roots embraced the foundations of these distant hills and already put forth those vigorous shoots which are the growth of freedom alone. A river flowed out from that tree of life and its glorious waters were sparkling in the early light of this new land. Brave men and fair women drank from that fountain and committed to us its course to future ages. The aged people of that time have long since departed. The company, few in number, great in heart, who celebrated here the Fourth of July of 1826 have moved on to an undiscovered country, all save a few white haired men who have come down to us from a former generation to witness the results of half a century.

Fifty years hence in 1926 will be an appropriate day to commemorate the Centennial of Texas. Of the children here to-day some will attend that distant future celebration. Then gray with age they will relate how in their youth they saw and talked with Austin's colonists, with men who fought at San Antonio, at San Jacinto and in the Indian wars.

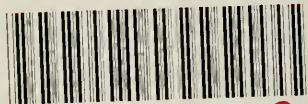
We will be buried with our hopes and fears
In the deep and silent tide of a hundred years.

May it be that then the golden candlestick may not have been taken away forever from out of its place in the temple of liberty, nor the sacred flame gone dim, but burning still with unfading radiance, and around the holy fane may posterity have builded wisely on the wide and strong foundations which our fathers laid.





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